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AUTHOR Antczak, Fred
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ABSTRACT

This paper advances 22 ideas for reducing the conflict between teaching and research demands of faculty at public research universities, based on suggestions generated by an ad hoc group of professors at the University of Iowa. Departments should try to make teaching as documentable as research, make teaching accomplishments as "portable" as research accomplishments, critically evaluate teaching, use multiple evaluation instruments, provide "teaching leaves" for curricular improvement, resist the notion of "released time" from teaching, have students complete midterm course evaluations, promote team teaching, foster contacts with other departments and institutions, develop a departmental alumni association, do exit interviews with departmental majors and alumni, prepare doctoral students in college-level teaching, and establish a teaching chair to honor distinguished teachers. The university as a whole should develop a campus teaching journal, emphasize quality over quantity in promotion decisions, allow groups of first-year students to take certain classes as a cohort, avoid quick-fix solutions, develop a teaching center, and use the teaching center to seek funds for guest lecturers and visiting teachers. (MDM)

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Fred Antczak
Department of Rhetoric
University of Iowa

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Learning and the Public Research University: Twenty-Two Suggestions for Reducing the Tension Between Teaching and Research

Fred Antczak
Department of Rhetoric
University of Iowa

In April of 1991, an ad hoc group of professors from the University of Iowa's Colleges of Liberal Arts, Law, Medicine, Business and Engineering began meeting and generating ideas on improving what we called the culture of teaching at the University of Iowa. These are some of the ideas that have arisen out of that discourse. Not all have been implemented; not all have even been objects of unanimous assent across campus, or even in our group. But some have actually attracted some additional funding from the Administration and the Legislature, and all have elicited further conversation, which has been healthy and invigorating.

It would probably take some major excavation to elicit a coherent philosophy of education from these suggestions. A disproportionate number of them respond to conditions that may be peculiarly important just now on our campus and in our state: for example "outcomes assessment" has become something of a mantra among legislators who have not yet shown they have any particular idea of what it means, so we've generated rather more ideas in response to that interest. We also have concerned ourselves about the prospects of a teaching center. But we have based our suggestions on assumptions about the University of Iowa that may apply to public research universities elsewhere.

We assume first that research is, and will continue to be, a largely unimpeachable function of our university. The administration has set the goal of being one of the top ten public research universities (whatever "top ten" might mean, and however pursuing that relative standing might serve the people of Iowa), and continuing to do good research will be an essential part of that.

So will the pursuit of grants, which seems ever more needful as it grows ever more competitive. Our University gets more than 22% of its overall budget from outside funding, and is not likely to begin valuing successful grant pursuit any less. Indeed, overall budget is a matter for concern, even though the Governor has proposed a modest increase in funding (an increase that itself would lag the current low rate of inflation), since the Legislature seems likely to cut that funding. I know of no reason to think that funding for humanities grants will take any great leap forward any time soon, thus making grant pursuit any less competitive and time consuming. Nor, in fact, would faculty in my department want to see research demoted.

But it is also true that for the foreseeable future, faculty will continue to be issued only 24 hours per day. So, second, we assume the key in formulating suggestions to improve teaching is to avoid opposing teaching against research. Realistic initiatives to improve teaching at public research universities have to make teaching and research <u>confluent</u>; we need to see improvements and accomplishments in both areas as enhancing our common "culture of learning." At least such suggestions must reduce the everyday tensions experienced between teaching and research by

finite people with flat resources and increasing demands.

We also assume, however, that the tax-paying public, especially those members of the public who are also paying rising tuition costs, is growing impatient with what they regard as a neglect of teaching at their public research university. This is especially so in the humanities, where the results of research seem to have less tangible payoffs than in engineering, medicine, and some of the sciences. There's no doubt that we've done and continue to do a strikingly inadequate job in explaining to the public why they have a stake in funding humanistic research. But it might improve our chances of making that case to talk about universities as places where learning goes on at every level. For that argument to work, we have to include our students more integrally in the university's culture of learning.

Finally we assume that we're not garage mechanics, developing quick fixes to essentially mechanical processes. We do want to institutionalize changes, but what we're doing on a more basic level is rebuilding a culture, a culture that in turn shapes professional attitudes and habits. It's clear that in the absence of ideas that reinforce a teaching culture, other habits and attitudes form and harden in response to the increasing pressures and the arguably imbalanced reward system of public research universities.

Let me divide these ideas into two categories: suggestions that aim to enhance the culture of teaching and learning within departments, and suggestions that aim to enhance the culture of teaching and learning across the university.

in the Department

1) adopt as a departmental goal the aim to make teaching as documentable as research. Make this goal part of your departmental reviews, your strategic plans and, if you're a department chair, commit faculty resources to it, especially to your procedures of recognizing gradations of good and excellent teaching.

2) along this line, realize the need to do whatever you can to make teaching accomplishments as "portable" as research accomplishments. Untenured faculty quite reasonably fear that attempts to enhance teaching might be mostly talk on the part of administrators, might be a temporary trend, or might go unrewarded at tenure time. The aim here is to build habits of teaching in faculty who in the current academic market will inevitably be pulled toward incentives that are fungible.

3) resist, at all costs, any reduction of assessment to a simple "threshold" model of assessing teaching: the governing question should never be allowed to become "is Professor X competent or not?" Gradations of excellence should receive gradations of recognition.

4) thus it becomes an imperative to multiply modes of evaluating teaching, moving toward a process that is as many-layered as possible. Toward this end, consider experimenting with variants of an idea that has been tried elsewhere, and that has been tailored for Iowa by my colleague John Huntley.

Professor Huntley has developed a different form for evalu-

ation--one that may be particularly useful for juniors and seniors in the major. The form has 6 columns, labeled 0 to 5. The list of professors the student has had appears in column 3; such a list ought to be readily extractable from the Registrar's records. Column 1 is titled "incomparable," allowing students to remove names from consideration for whatever reason they wish. Huntley claims this establishes a sufficiently homogeneous set to warrant segregation from the center column outward in both directions on the ground of relative quality. Column 3 is titled "the quality of teaching given me by the persons in this list was standard for my experience so far." Names are then to be moved one column right or left of center to indicate somewhat less/more effective teaching by this person; markedly less or more effective teaching can move a name two columns. But the trick is, each move has to be symmetrical; each move has to offset with one in the opposite direction and of the offsetting size.

This mode, of course, has strengths and weaknesses. It does prevent what we call the "Lake Woebegon effect" where every teacher turns out above average. But it is by its nature comparative, and thus more appropriate for students who have taken many courses from many different teachers; in its current form it directly compares teachers in small seminars with those in large lectures, and those teaching required freshman courses with those working with senior majors levels; and it is very summative, not designed to say much about what makes the teacher relatively better or not so good.

5) so, even if some form of this approach proves useful, remember that this or any "single scale" approach diminishes teaching. No department would think its research would be represented with adequate dimensionality by rankings that purported to lump every distinct line of research into judgments that "he's fifth best, she's fourth," etc. on the same single scale. It should be an explicit goal to multiply your department's axes of comparison and dimensions of evaluation, so that your assessment of teaching may be more nearly as rich as your assessment of research.

6) this is an idea already practiced in various forms in various places, but rarely at the department level: given that universities and departments provide "research leaves", Department Chairs should seek to fund ways of providing, on a competitive basis, "teaching leaves" for curricular improvements and innovation. You or your Dean may object that you lack the resources to do this, but insisting on it as a departmental priority may itself shake some additional resources loose. At least it puts your money where your mouth is.

7) where possible, resist the notion of "released time" from teaching, as if teaching were something a professional would really want release from. Departments could at least express their principled preference for alternate compensation in, for example, the form of summer research support.

8) request a statement from each faculty member documenting what they learned from their teaching that semester--from preparing each course, from adjusting it along the way, even (could this be imagined) from his or her students. These statements should be part of annual reviews of untenured faculty, and, perhaps especially, part of promotion reviews subsequent to tenure. This provides promotion committees with interesting cumulative data on the relation between a professor's teaching and research modes of participating in learning. I've also found that asking a similar question of teaching assistants habituates them to look for connections between their teaching and their research, so I ask it of my teaching advisees too.

9) of course Peter Elbow is also right; wherever it is appropriate, students should have the opportunity to do a thorough response to courses at mid-term. These student responses more valuable as descriptive rather than as evaluative, addressing adjustments that might still be feasible. When the responses go in the instructor's personnel file, they should be accompanied by the instructor's discursive responses at midterm as well as his or her retrospective comments at semester's end.

10) wherever subject-appropriate and FTE-sible, promote team-teaching opportunities, within the department and across departmental lines. Aside from the experience such opportunities may offer, it adds a "layer" to the documentation of teaching from the rather different perspective of a colleague. This layer may provide a usefully different insight into the expertise of the

teacher and the quality of their preparation.

11) consider developing for your department a Board of Electronic Visitors--alumni, faculty in peer departments and institutions nearby, famous scholars you have connections to, etc.--for advice on teaching materials and to promote scholarly contacts especially for untenured faculty. The <u>inter</u>departmental uses of your Visitors' advice and assessment may be as helpful as the <u>intra</u>departmental ones.

12) an idea that many departments have already begun: develop a departmental alumni association to which you report regularly, and report to that audience not only about research accomplishments, but teaching accomplishments as well. Faculty might be asked to report about their research and teaching as two related modes of the learning in which they're engaged, and to discuss their connections.

13) if you do not do them already, consider doing exit interviews of your majors, and of your alumni some years out. Take this opportunity to create an information base about what students perceive as your areas of teaching success and failure. Seek to determine, among other things, which courses and teachers made a difference for their education, and get the best description you can of those differences.

14) we make it a point to prepare our Ph.D.s to do college-level research; consider ways of preparing them also to do col-

lege-level teaching. For example, make it part of the doctoral degree requirements to present a course proposal for an undergraduate majors' course based on the dissertation area, and include undergraduate majors in the audience for that presentation. If the majority of your Ph.D.'s get their first jobs as places other than major universities--Iowa, for example, places many of its graduates at smaller liberal arts colleges--it may better prepare them for succeeding on these campuses by also including in this audience colleagues from other departments. To be able to talk about your research as a wellspring for your teaching to colleagues in other departments is an important proficiency to take to one's first job.

15) develop for your department a Teaching Chair for honoring distinguished teachers, with a finite term for holding the chair finite (say 3 years), and one time only eligibility. To remind not only administrators and alumni, but especially your faculty, that good teaching has a history in your department, the chair should originally be named after one of your great teachers emeriti. But to add to the honor, the chair should also temporarily carry the name of its most recent holder. For example, in our Department the Teaching Chair might be named for Richard Braddock; Cleo Martin might have been the first recipient of the Braddock Chair; when she stepped down, the next awardee, say Donovan Ochs, would hold the Braddock-Martin chair. Then when Sharon Crowley receives the honor, she will hold the Braddock-Ochs chair, etc. Of course I think my Dean should ante up a modest honorarium--$500 every three years doesn't seem awfully

much--so that this isn't just a paper honor. I cannot report to you, however, that I have yet brought her to this point of view.

<u>across the College</u>

16) develop a campus teaching journal. To insure that it steers away from celebrations of classroom gurus and toward explications of teaching innovations that might be emulated and adapted, faculty, not PR people, should edit it. Consider distributing it to all faculty electronically. Explore the possibilities of sending some version of it to alumni, parents or trustees too. Or consider publishing it electronically in league with peer institutions.

17) for annual reviews and, insofar as is possible, for promotion decisions, treat faculty time as finite and emphasize quality over quantity. Perhaps no factor does more to cause bad habits with regard to teaching than a demand for publications that seems limitless, coupled with an expectation about teaching that is perceived as simply clearing the threshold of bare competence. Since quality is a better predictor than quantity for after-tenure performance, consider adopting some appropriate version of the plans piloted at Stanford and at Yale for discipline-specific maximum numbers of publications to be submitted at least for annual reviews, and seek to persuade the College to adopt at least the option for a similar standard for tenure review.

18) here's an idea for big campuses that seem to intimidate first year undergrads. To de-mystify the size and impersonality

of the place, and to give first year students something intellectual in common to talk about, my colleague Donald McCloskey developed an idea of students taking three of their required courses together. If you were coming to Iowa next fall--I understand Indiana has a similar option too--you could choose to join a cohort of 20 first year students who might be registered for a block of three classes together: their Rhetoric requirement, their Western Civ and their math class, say, or it may be their language class, their science and their fine arts requirement.

At least one these classes should be a small discussion class; the cohort might then be blended into larger classes, but at least the students will know some familiar faces there. Involve hall life wherever possible: the cohort might be drawn from one or two floors of the same dorm. Many dorms have classrooms in which one of these required classes could be scheduled.

This is not a completely cost-free idea, but it's as cheap as a few keystrokes and a pamphlet going to incoming students explaining the program. There's a tremendous ratio of return for that investment.

The idea of a Teaching Center has recently become popular with administrators at Iowa, and I understand it's gaining currency at other institutions. While I might want to make the argument that too much of teaching is discipline-specific for such an institution to work in the forms we've so far heard proposed, I want to close with four ideas to propose in connection with such a prospect if it seems unavoidable:

19) first, do no harm. Realize that such an institution could only hope to succeed with the full support of the faculty, and their support will only be forthcoming if faculty are broadly convinced that the institution is not simply a public relations gambit--a door with a secretary, an office invented and run by people distant from the classroom, funded out of scarce moneys that may be squeezed out of departmental initiatives. The wrong "center"--at best an irrelevance, at worst a costly intrusion into the very processes it purports to promote--could easily harm the status of teaching.

Further, the announced ambition of a teaching center should not be to suddenly and utterly transfigure all the teaching we have been doing. Such an institution, given time, resources and rewards, may be able to render a margin of improvement; at best, it may give us an edge. But to suggest that the quality of our teaching <u>can</u> be, or <u>needs</u> to be, completely transformed is to overpromise badly, to misrepresent the University badly, and thus is unlikely to attract, or to deserve, the faculty support a teaching center absolutely needs. Nor should such a center ever agree to take on any of what our administrators call "summative evaluative functions." Candidates for tenure and promotion should have their teaching "summatively evaluated" by their departmental colleagues only.

20) at all costs avoid running a university fix-it shop. Even if there were such "fixes" to be had, they could only be discipline-specific, and as such are only to fostered at the departmental level, or even more locally. Departments that are

doing what they should in working on teaching would only be cramped and interfered with by a fix-it shop; those that aren't would use such a center as an excuse to continue to ignore their duties. Worse, if those who attend such a center are those who are identified or self-identified as in need of remedial work, it will only further stigmatize the center in particular and teaching in general. A teaching center should seek always to bring the most positive recognition possible to good teaching, and always to avoid exacerbating whatever stigma that involvement in teaching may carry.

21) teaching, like anything else in a university, can only be sustained if it becomes a valued part of the everyday culture of our work, among the people with whom and in the places where we do it on a daily basis. With that in mind, we should ask "why a <u>center</u> at all?" In this spirit I've proposed (and our provost has promised just these, er, several months ago to get back to me promptly on this) that we name our center the "Iowa Teaching Edge" which I admit is too cute a name by half. The "Edge" I envision would be less a place than an ongoing conversation, not unlike many of the research groups on campus. It might draw its minimal and determinedly non-bureaucratic staff from some of the distinguished teachers on campus--the holder of a Braddock Teaching Chair in Rhetoric, and similarly distinguished historians, engineers, communication scholars--to bring some visibility and some status to that conversation. Such figures might then amplify talk about what's already going on in various departments, or perhaps in similar departments at peer institutions.

They might advance the campus conversation on, for example, how more reliably to recognize, and how more usefully to reward, degrees of teaching excellences beyond the first threshold of competence. It's our experience at Iowa that some departments already have developed approaches that might be partly transplanted or translated, but no occasion existed to talk about them outside departments. Someone ought to be providing that occasion on a regular basis.

22) finally, to adapt an old University of Chicago idea, this is the ideal campus institution to seek funds for Distinguished Lecturers and Visitors in Teaching, and to employ such dignitaries for campus-wide, as well as departmental, purposes.

I close by admitting again that not all these ideas have been implemented, though some of them have, at least in part. Not all the others have gained wide assent, though some of them have started people talking. But that discourse, in the end, has been the best accomplishment of our faculty group: to engage at least a few more colleagues in talking about teaching as if it were less a distraction from the project of the university, and more an integral part of our common culture of learning.